

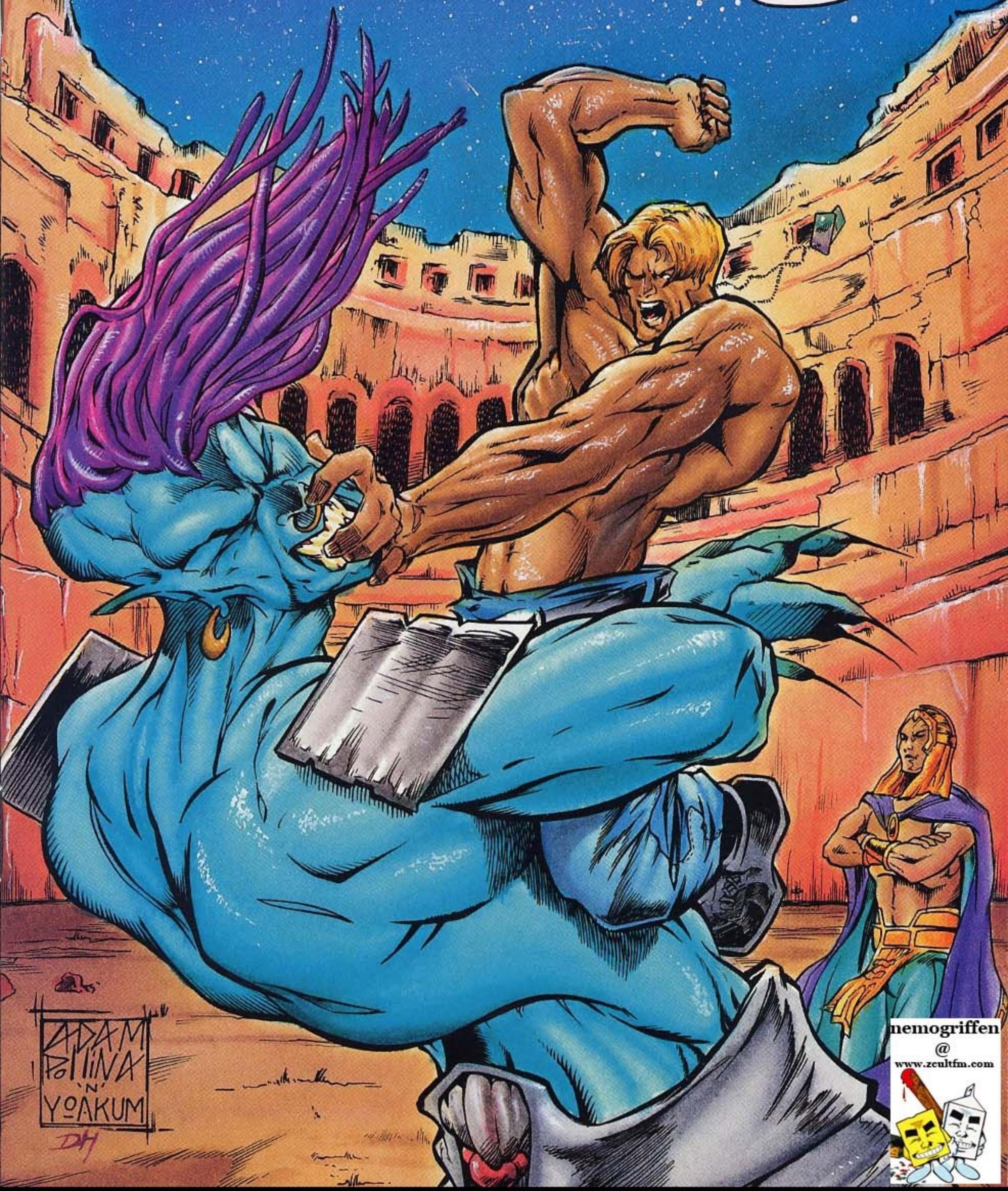
DEFIANT.

5

\$2.50

\$3.50 CANADA

CHARLEMAGNE



ADAM
POLLINA
N.
YOAKUM

DH

nemogriffen

@

www.zcultfm.com



ONE MAN CAN

THERE'S THIS GUY WHO SAYS HE'S GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD. HE APPARENTLY HAS THE POWER TO DO SO. HE CALLS HIMSELF THE DANCER.

RIGHT NOW, HE'S IN A PENTHOUSE APARTMENT IN NEW YORK CITY, GETTING READY FOR THE BIG MOMENT.

THEN THERE'S CHARLES SMITH.

HE NEARLY DIED ONCE, BUT CAME BACK FROM THE EDGE OF DEATH.

NOW, THAT ALONE MIGHT MAKE YOU FEEL SPECIAL...

...BUT CHARLES SMITH RETURNED TO LIFE REMADE, WITH AWESOME STRENGTH.

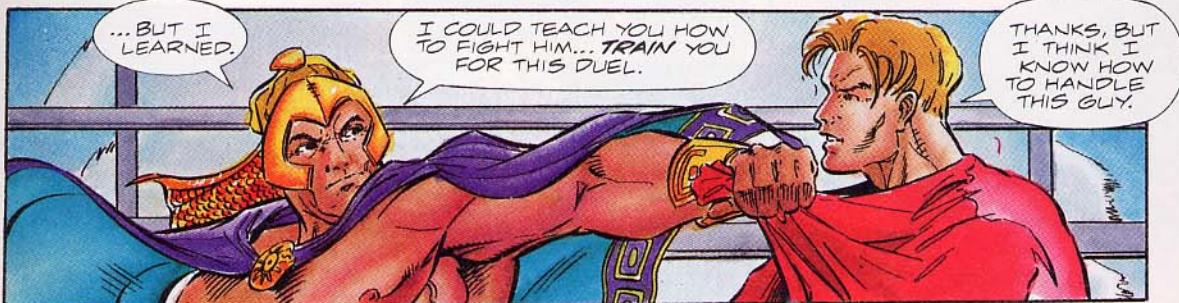
HE FIGURED THERE MUST BE A REASON. AND WHEN HE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE DANCER, HE KNEW WHAT IT WAS.

HE LIVES TO STOP THE DANCER, AND UNTIL HE DOES, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS. HE'S BEEN HUNTING THE GUY.

A SECOND AGO, FROM THE TOP OF A SKYSCRAPER, CHARLES SPOTTED HIM TWENTY STORIES BELOW.

CAN'T WASTE TIME WHEN DESTINY AWAITS. HE DON'T EVEN BOTHER YELLING "GERONIMO."





SOMETIME
LATER...

...CHARLES BEGINS TO
FEEL THE HEAT...

...SEARING
HIM.
COOKING
HIM.

THE HEAT EVOKE THE
MEMORY OF
CRADLING HIS DYING
BROTHER'S CHARRED
AND SMOLPERING
BODY IN HIS ARMS...

...AND THE NIGHTMARE JOLTS
HIM AWAKE SCREAMING.

...THE MEMORY BILLWS
LIKE NAPALM INTO A
FIERY NIGHTMARE...

AHHH!

HIS CONSCIOUSNESS
SIFTS REALITY FROM
SUBCONSCIOUS
HORROR...

...BUT THE SCORCHING
SUN BEATING DOWN
AND THE CHAINS
BITING HIS FLESH
ARE BARELY
PREFERABLE.

WHAT IS
THIS?

HELLO,
CHARLES.

YOU TRICKED
ME! WHAT DID
YOU DO...
DRUG ME?

YES,
WE
DID!

I'M SORRY I
HAVE TO DO
THIS, CHARLES,
BUT...

...OH, BY THE
WAY THIS IS
MY SERVANT,
IGO.

IT IS AN HONOR
TO MEET CHARLES
SMITH THE
CHAMPION OF
LIFE!

I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU, CHARLES. I DID FIGHT THE DANCER AGES AGO...

...IN MY OWN TIME.

IN FACT, YOU MAY THINK OF THIS AS YOUR FIRST LESSON AND FIRST TEST!

...I CAN HELP YOU PREPARE, AND I WILL...

WHILE YOU'RE BOUND AND HELPLESS, MEDITATE UPON YOUR STRENGTH. EXAMINE IT... COME TO KNOW IT...

...AND CONSIDER CAREFULLY ITS LIMITS. A WARRIOR SHOULD KNOW THE TRUE EXTENT OF HIS POWER.

LET ME GO, AND I'LL SHOW YOU POWER!



COME BACK HERE! LET ME GO!

RELAX, AND BE GLAD YOU'RE NOT FIGHTING THE DANCER NOW.

I'M SAVING YOUR BUTT, BOY!

MAYBE FATE CHOSE ME TO INTERFERE WITH HIM, I GO.

BESIDES, I'VE BEEN GETTING READY TO COPE WITH THE DANCER FOR SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS. I'VE GOT PLANS AFOOT...

IS IT WISE, THRAKAHL, TO INTERFERE WITH THE ONE FATE CHOSE TO BE THE CHAMPION OF LIFE?

...THAT COULD GET RID OF THE DANCER'S REASON FOR WIPING OUT ALL LIFE.

I DON'T NEED SOME OVEREAGER, OVER-GROWN, UNDER-RIPENED, HALF-BAKED KID MESSING THINGS UP.

HMF. AFTER A WHILE OUT IN THIS HEAT, HE'LL BE QUITE FULLY BAKED.

THE HEAT MAKES THE DOGTAGS SIZZLE AGAINST HIS SKIN.

THEY WERE PETE'S.

CHARLES' BROTHER. HIS FRIEND. HIS HERO.

SEEMED LIKE ONE DAY THEY WERE HOME, JOKING AT THE FAMILY DINNER TABLE...

...THEN SUDDENLY THEY WERE IN 'NAM, AND WITH BLOODY FINGERS, CHARLES WAS PULLING THE DOGTAGS FROM PETE'S BURNING CORPSE.

THEY SIZZLED IN HIS HAND.

IT WAS ALL SO UN-FAIR...

...AND HE WISHED WITH ALL HIS HEART THAT HE HAD THE POWER TO DO SOMETHING TO STOP THE KILLING...STOP DEATH.

...A LONG TIME LATER, HE AWAKENED FROM A COMA WITH POWER INDEED-- MIRACULOUS STRENGTH.

MAYBE MORE THAN HE KNOWS. HE DECIDES TO MEDITATE ON HIS STRENGTH.

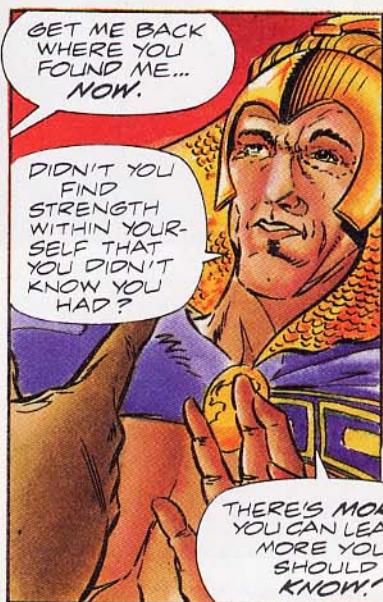
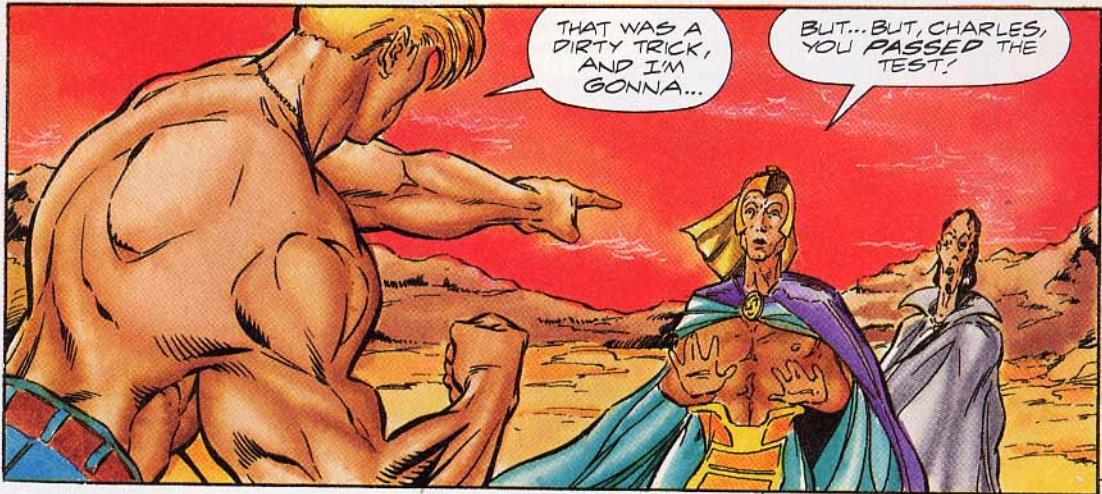
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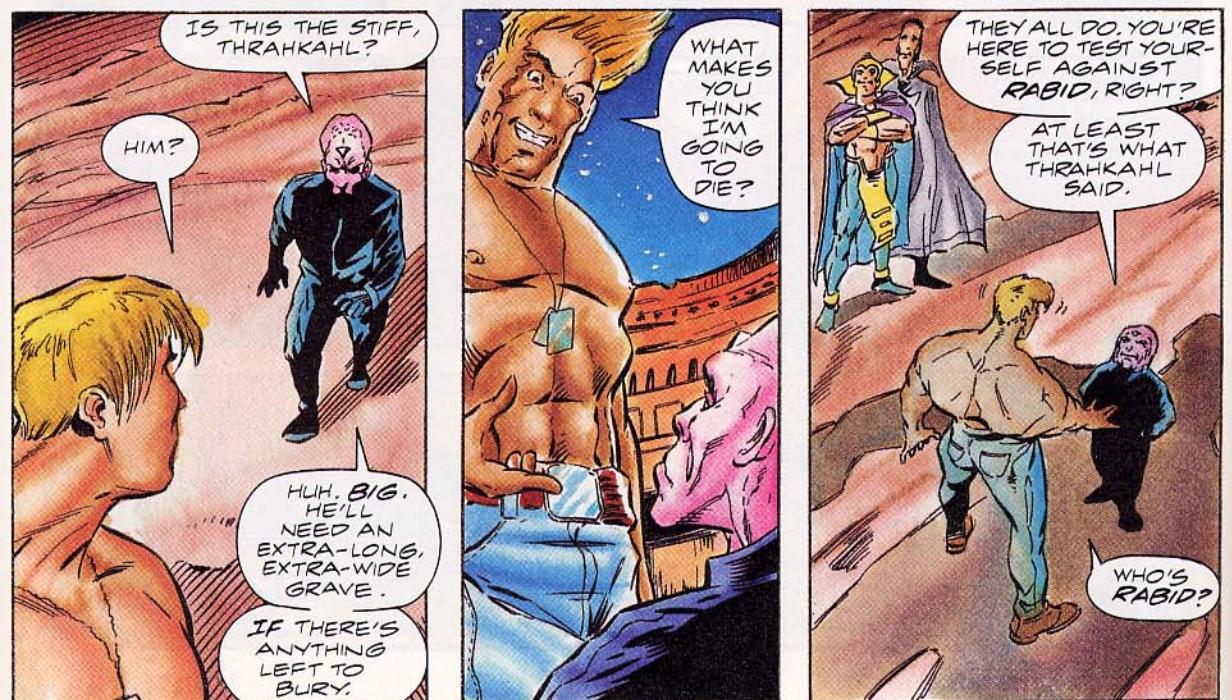
DID YOU HEAR...

ANY LAST WORDS, YOU SCUM-BUMS?

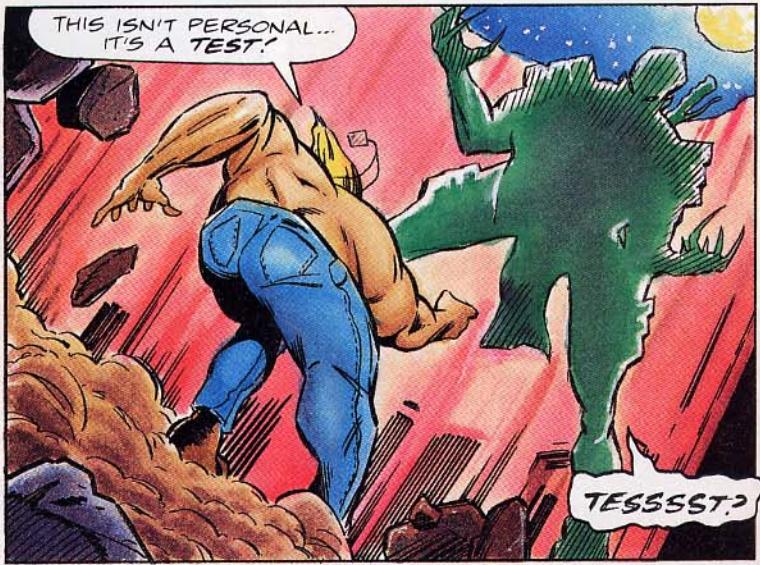
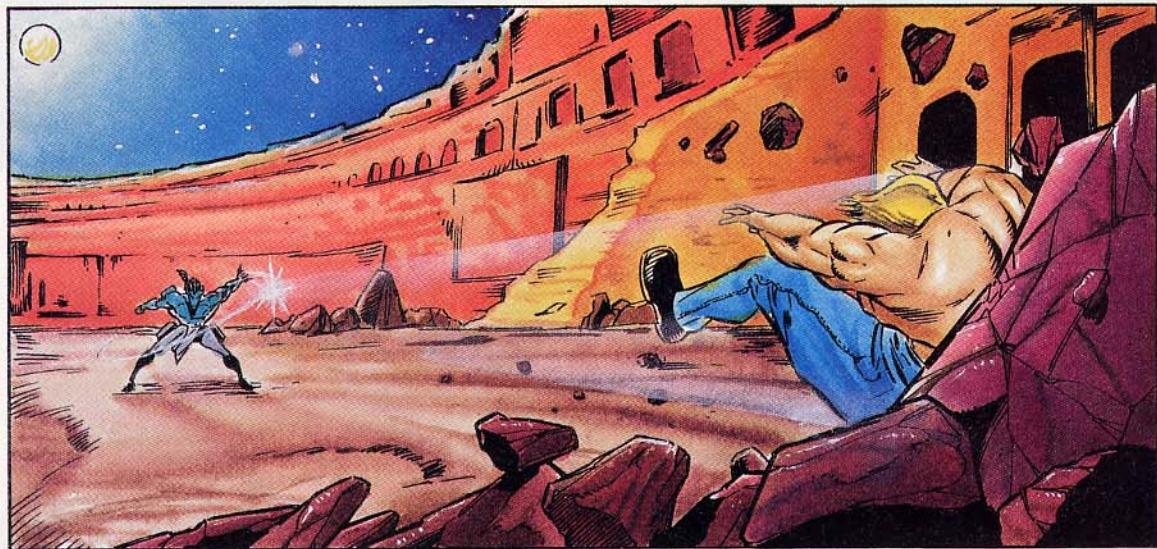
...THAT?











HOLY...!
HE'S FAST,
TOO!

NNNO
TESSST.





CHARLES, I... I WAS HOPING TO MAKE YOU REALIZE THAT YOU'RE NOT YET READY. I DIDN'T MEAN FOR YOU TO BE SLAUGHTERED. I'M SORRY.

YOU DIDN'T FOOL ME, THRAHKHAL. I KNEW YOU WERE A RAT, BUT I FIGURED IF I COULD DEAL WITH WHATEVER YOU THREW AT ME...

BESIDES, I WON.

HO! FUNNY STUFF

KILL!

GRRRIND.

THISSS GRRRUG BEAT UP OURRR LLLITTLE BRRROTHERR!

RRRID HIMMM.

OH, GEEZ.

AGAIN, CHARLES, I'M SORRY. I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STOP RABID FROM KILLING YOU, BUT...

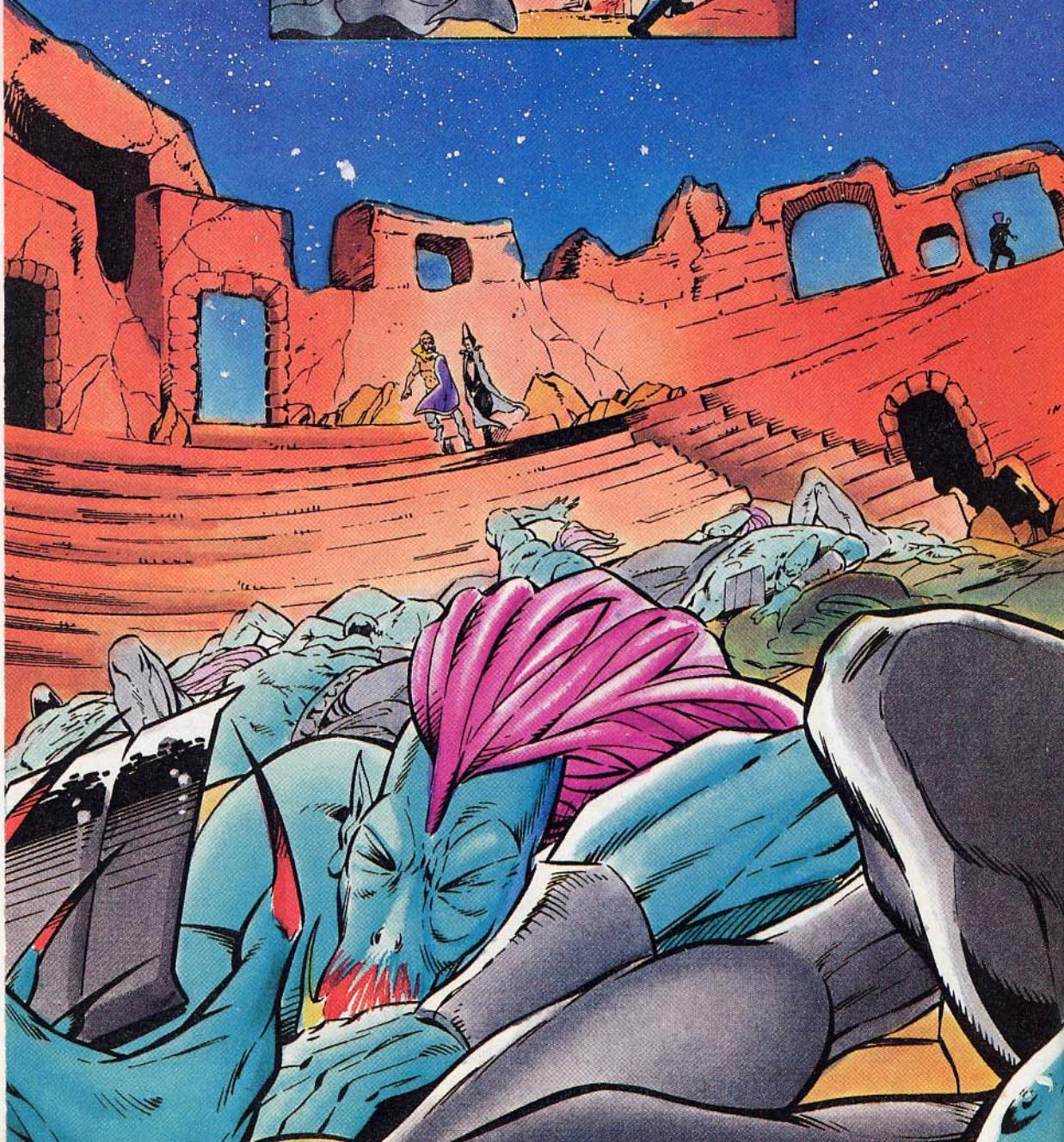
...NOW HIS WHOLE FAMILY'S UPSET.

HOURS
LATER...



MULTIPLE
CONTUSIONS,
MASSIVE
TRAUMA...

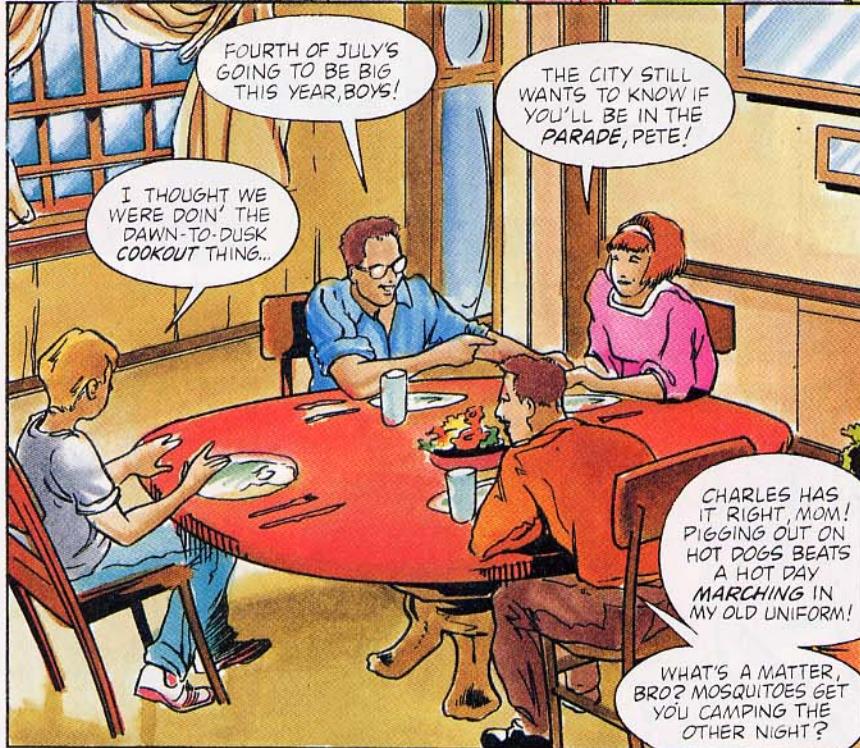
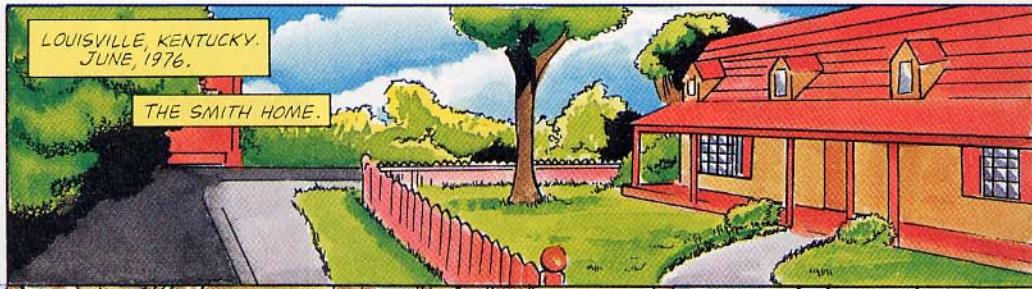
...BUT NO
SALE
FOR ME.

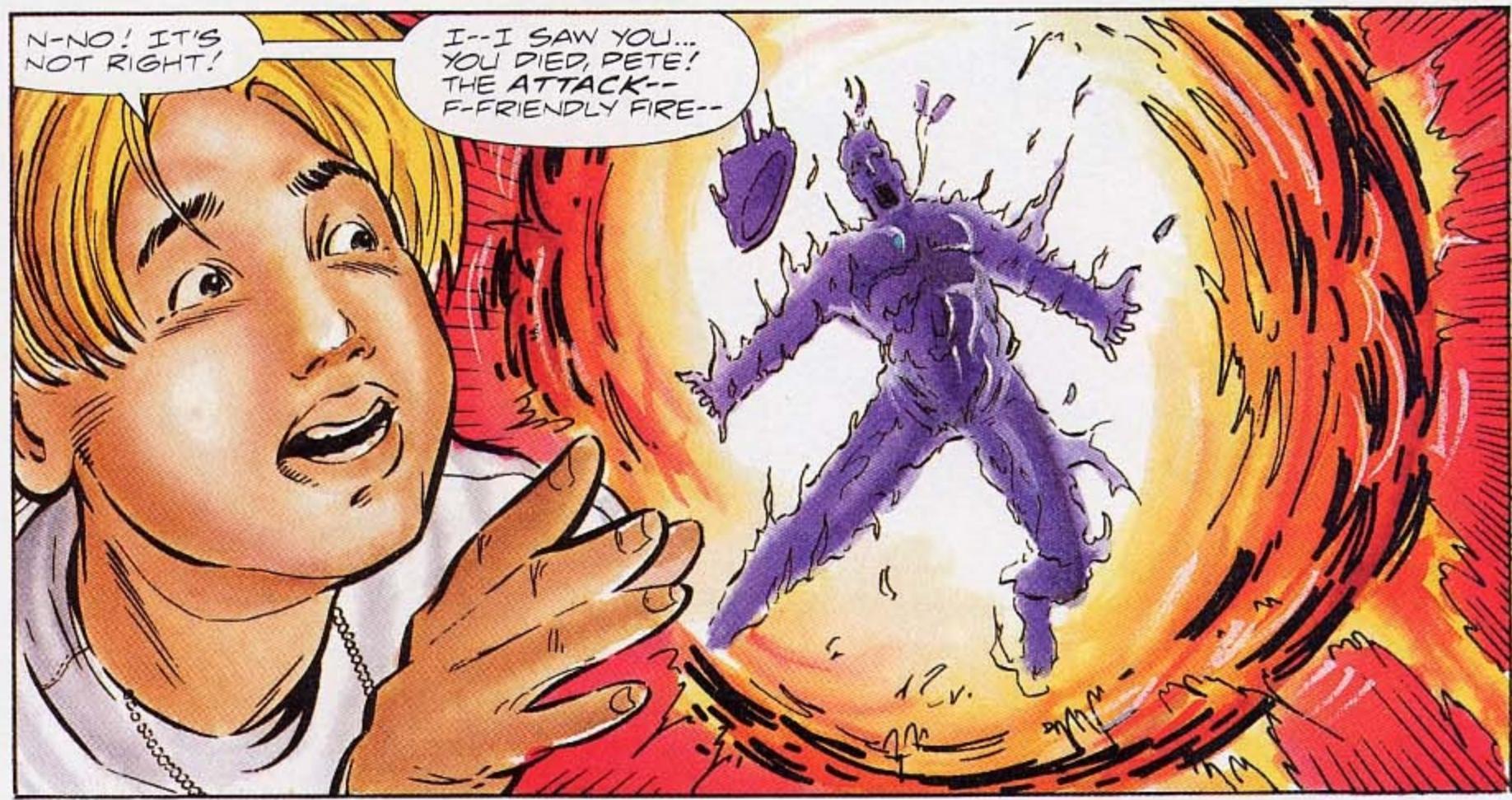


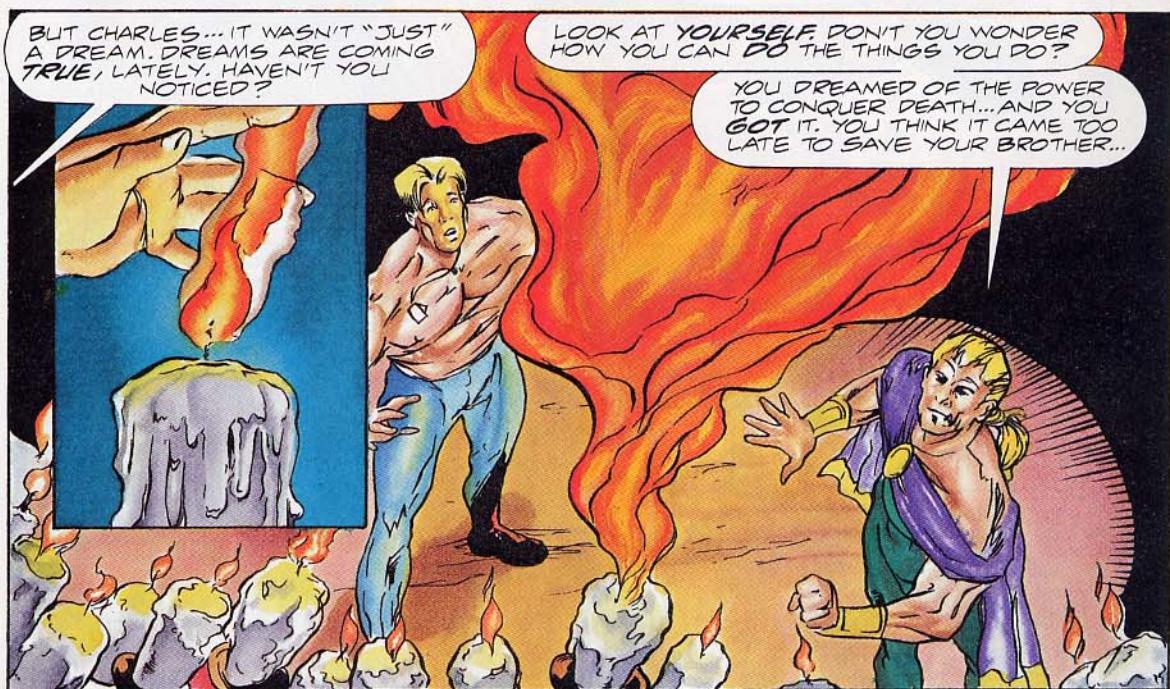
...AND DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT THE
ODDS.

I ALWAYS SAID,
IF I THINK I CAN,
I CAN NOW I'M
REALLY CONVINCED.

TEACH ME
SOME
MORE,
MISTER T.







THIS IS A CRITICAL TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE, CHARLES.

ALL THE BARRIERS SEPARATING DREAMS AND REALITY ARE FALLING.

BUT... THE DANCER... THE DANCER... AND I... WERE AMONG THE FIRST DREAMS TO BECOME REAL.

...AND I'M GOING TO STOP HIM.

DREAMS CAN BE REAL NOW. GO AHEAD, TAKE YOUR BROTHER'S HAND.

HE'S A NIGHT-MARE. HE SAYS HE'S GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD...

THAT'S WHAT I THINK OF YOUR CON-JOB MAGIC TRICKS.

CHARLES, PLEASE....! LEAVE THE DANCER TO ME. I HAVE A PLAN...!

YEAH? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO IN THE FIRST PLACE?

WOULD YOU HAVE LISTENED?

PROBABLY NOT. SEE YA.

YOU... YOU CAN TRAVERSE THE QUANTUM FIELD?

YEP. ONCE I SEE A TRICK A FEW TIMES, I CATCH ON.

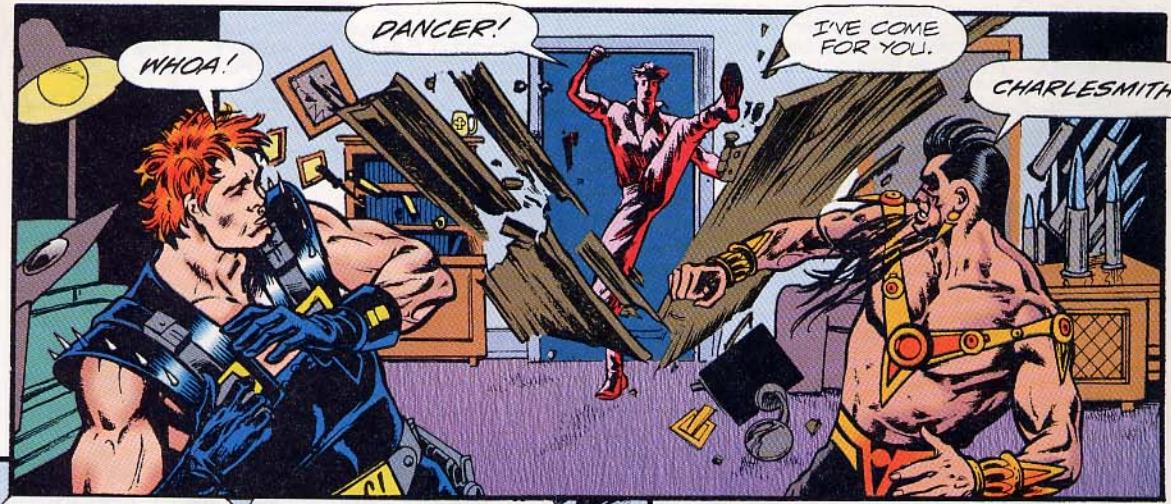
CHARLES! CHARLES, WAIT...! DON'T...!

ARHH! IF YOU FORCE THE DANCER'S HAND... THE END WILL BEGIN TOO SOON...

I'M NOT READY YET!

NEM'S BONES, CHARLES...!

BULL-HEADED....



GUESS HE FORGOT TO MENTION THAT TO YOU, HUH?

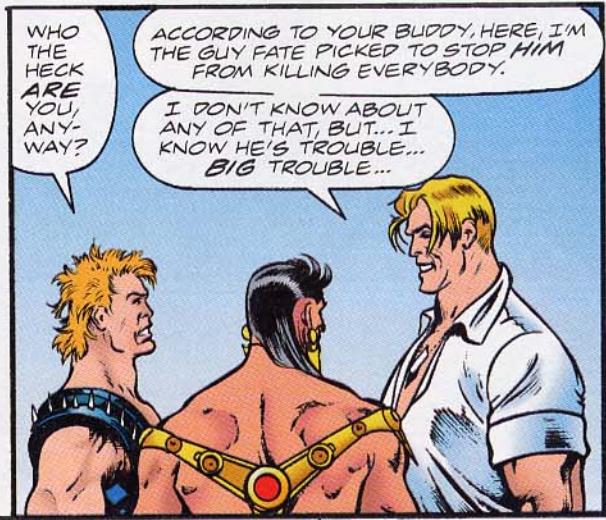
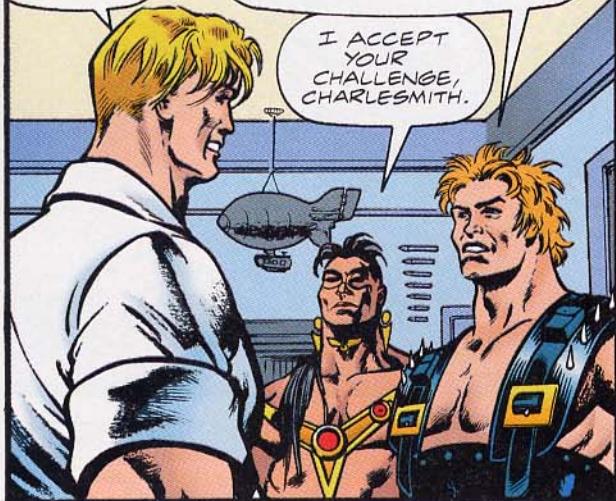
WELL... NO, HE SAID ONCE OR TWICE THAT HE, UH, MIGHT HAVE TO... UM... YOU KNOW, DESTROY ALL EXISTENCE, BUT...

I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE, CHARLES SMITH.

GOOD. YOU READY?

A WARRIOR MUST EVER BE READY TO ACCEPT THE WILL OF FATE. FATE HAS BROUGHT YOU HERE NOW...

HOLD IT! THE DANCER'S ALL BUNGLED UP AND UNDONE AND STUFF...



LOS ANGELES...

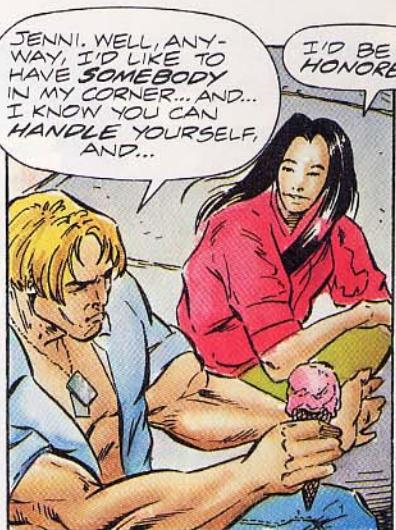
IT'S A LOT
TO ASK... AND...
AND I HARDLY
KNOW YOU. I
MEAN...

...I DON'T EVEN
KNOW YOUR REAL
NAME, I KNOW
THE OTHER KIDS
IN YOUR LITTLE
GROUP CALL YOU
"WHITE CRANE...."

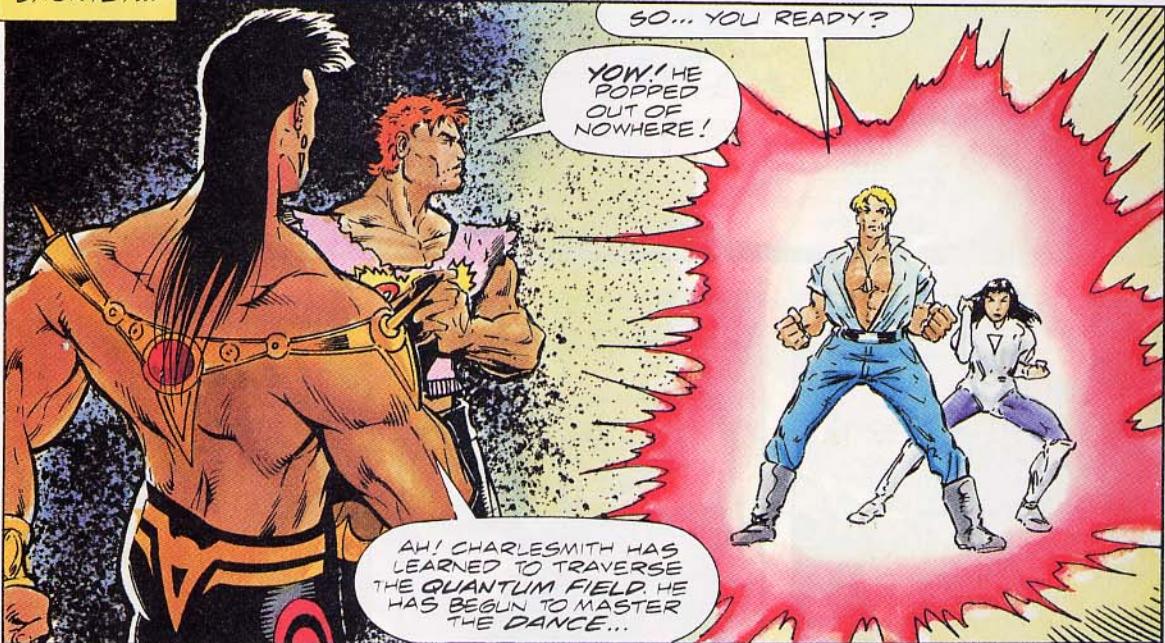
YEAH. WE'RE
TRYING TO DO
A SUPER-HERO
THING, LIKE IN
WILDC.A.T.S OR
YOUNGBLOOD.
ANYWAY, MY
NAME'S JENNI...

JENNI. WELL, ANY-
WAY, I'D LIKE TO
HAVE SOMEBODY
IN MY CORNER... AND...
I KNOW YOU CAN
HANDLE YOURSELF,
AND...

I'D BE
HONORED.



SHORTLY...



...AND SO, NOW HIS POWER
TRULY RIVALS MINE.

YOU PICK THE PLACE,
DANCER! JUST THINK
OF WHERE YOU WANT
TO BE!



THERE IS BUT
ONE SUITABLE
PLACE.

ANGKOR
WAT!

ANCHOR
WHAT?

IT'S AN ANCIENT
TEMPLE IN CAMBODIA,
STUPID...

...BUILT BY KING
YASOVARMAN
IN THE NINTH
CENTURY.

ACCORDING TO
HINDU COSMOLOGY,
IT STANDS AT THE
CENTER OF THE
UNIVERSE.

HOW DO YOU KNOW
ALL THAT?

I'M
CAMBODIAN--
WELL, AMERICAN,
NOW--BUT
EVERYBODY
KNOWS THAT!

ANY TIME,
DANCER.
MAKE YOUR
MOVE.

YOU ARE AS DEFIANT
AS LIFE ITSELF, CHARLES SMITH.

ON YOUR
GUARD,
THEN.

THERE'S THIS GUY WHO SAYS HE'S GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD. HE CALLS HIMSELF THE DANCER.

IT'S ALL COME DOWN TO THESE TWO AND THIS MOMENT.

THEN, THERE'S CHARLES SMITH.

CAN'T WASTE TIME WHEN DESTINY AWAITS.

CHARLES FEELS READY-- REALLY READY--AT LAST. HE'S PSYCHED. AND HE'S NOT LETTING ANYTHING ELSE GET IN HIS WAY.

NEXT:
DESTINY